

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY

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Processing Inactive and Deficit Projects

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Purpose

To increase efficiency and decrease costs for the Department of Planning and Land Use ("Department") and its customers by developing a program within the Department that reduces the ongoing administrative management and costs of processing privately initiated discretionary projects with a history of inactivity and/or deficient financial accounts.

Background

The Department is responsible for continually processing several hundred discretionary projects within time parameters established by numerous state and local laws, ordinances, and policies. Currently more than one-third of the projects being processed with the Department have a history of case inactivity and more than one-fourth have financial accounts with insufficient funds to cover the cost of processing. In order to meet established review and processing times, the Department spends a considerable amount of time attempting to obtain requested additional information and/or funds required to move a project through the discretionary process. These types of projects result in a diversion of staff resources, affect internal efficiencies with regards to being able to process other discretionary projects in an expeditious manner, and result in periodic charges to applicants, who many times, are not able to expeditiously proceed with their project due to financial hardships or other similar external factors.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that, effective January 1, 2010, applicants for projects considered inactive or in deficit will be notified in writing that the project will be placed into an idle status within 60 days of issuance of written notification. Projects will be classified as inactive if required information and/or document(s) are not received by the Department within 12 months from the due date specified in the most recent County correspondence letter, such as a scoping or technical study comment letter. Projects will be classified as in deficit if the financial account has remained in a negative balance for more than 90 days after the date of a written request for an additional deposit.

Placement of an inactive or deficit project into an idle status means that the project will 1) be administratively placed on hold and designated as idle, 2) the Department Project Manager will be removed from the project, and 3) the project file(s) will be retained in an idle status library. Upon being designated as idle, all future project inquiries will be directed to an appointed DPLU Project Coordinator. In order to reactivate the project, the applicant will be required to provide the information requested in the most recent County correspondence letter and provide a financial deposit of sufficient amount to cover the cost of processing the discretionary project, as requested by Department. Projects placed in idle status are allowed to remain in such status for a cumulative total of 2 years.

If an inactive or deficit project is not reactivated prior to the conclusion of the two years, the Department will bring any remaining inactive or deficit projects forward to the appropriate decision maker with a recommendation of denial due to inadequate progress as authorized by CEQA

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Guidelines Section 15109, or by Section 362 of Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Code, Schedule B, 5 and 6.

When a project is reactivated from an idle status, a Project Manager will be assigned. The Department will require that the project be comprehensively reviewed to determine applicability of new and/or revised ordinances, policies, standards, and regulations. Updates to project technical reports will also likely be required, project consultants will be required to complete Memorandum of Understanding's (MOU) pursuant to County CEQA Guidelines (if not already completed), and technical reports, if not previously accepted, will be required to comply with the currently effective Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content Requirements for applicable subject areas.

The financial responsible party, as identified in the project application, will be responsible for all charges related to the administrative functions identified in this policy, including charges for the time needed to become familiar with the project and to scope the project in accordance with the above established criteria.

This policy is not intended to be used as a tool to allow an applicant to place their project on hold when there is evidence that the project has unresolvable conflicts with applicable ordinances, codes, polices, and regulations that would warrant a denial of the project.

Exceptions

This policy does not apply to any properties, where there is a discretionary project on file with the Department of Planning and Land Use, for which a code violation has been issued or has an active codes case.

Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by December 31, 2012.

Board Action

10/21/09 (6)

CAO Reference

Department of Planning and Land Use